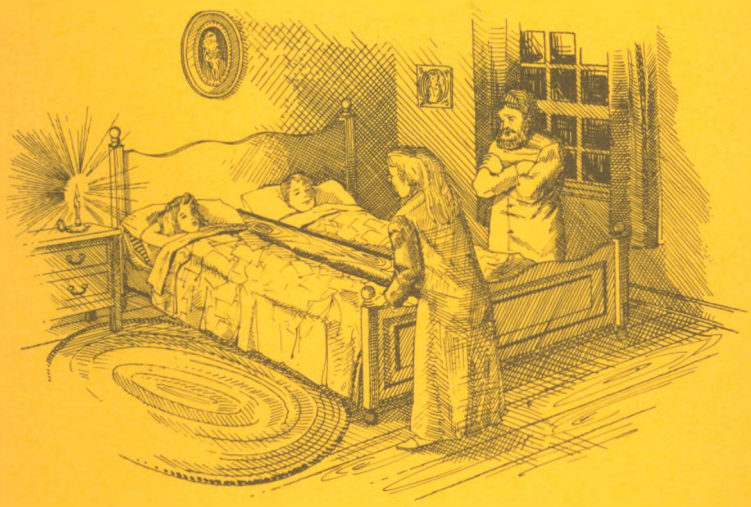
Night Life of the

Pennsylvania Dutch

(Better Known as Bundling)

J. E. HERRERA A.B., B.D.M.S.M.



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This book—

is affectionately dedicated to Ralph and Carl Bear. Two of the finest Dutchmen I've ever known;- also to my wife Bettie, who is my real "bundle" of joy in this life and last but not least to "Bundlers" everywhere.

The Author

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Bundling Sack

BED ROOM HABITS OF THE PA. DUTCH: BETTER KNOWN AS BUNDLING. . .

It soon becomes apparent to the serious student of Pennsylvania Dutch folklore, that the bed-room habits of the "DUTCH" people are extremely unique and interesting. Interesting, not only because of the obvious; but fascinating because of what is not so obvious to most of us.

"Bundling" or bed-room courting,—as it has sometimes been called was and perhaps still is, a most unusual way of wooing ones sweetheart. Back in the (good old days) and even before, ***whenever that was,** the custom of BUNDLING was practiced without fanfare or too much publicity.

To most people the word "bundling" suggests a "covering up" or wearing of lots of clothing on a cold day. To some, it may mean to stack papers or books together in a pile so as to make a bundle. But to a Dutchman, to bundle means to go to bed with one of the opposite sex or visit the bed-room of a sweetheart in order to talk to ones beloved; not taking off the clothes or at least very many. Sometimes too, in order to keep warm on a cold winters night bundling was initiated. You see, after the fire is out in the stove in a Pa. farm-house, it really gets cold. Since Mom and Pop won't add another stick of firewood, one had no other choice, but to go to bed.

Many people believe that this custom originated in the New England States. Most dictionaries state this fact when they describe the word "BUNDLE". Remembering however, that dictionaries are not the last word in everything, let the reader observe that Bundling is much older than America. It should be stated that bundling may easily be thousands of years old.

In the Holy Bible in the book of Ruth, mention is made of an evening spent together on a threshing room floor by Ruth and Boaz. In Ruth 3:2–14 the account is given as follows:

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and annoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not, I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning,

that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part to thee, as the LORD liveth; lie down until the morning.
14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

Some writers would have one believe that this was the first case of bundling. I seriously doubt that. This practice was an old custom even in that period of time. The origin of bundling is not fixed in history, nor will it ever be brought to a single episode of the Bible.

Bundling is something that developed naturally out of necessity and curiosity. The practice cannot be contained to the North American continent. More than likely it had its widest progress in Europe in such countries as Wales, Norway, Holland, Germany, Sweden and smaller States of Europe. Accounts of this kind of behavior have have appeared all over the world.

Bundling might have been considered quite a usual thing among the poor, where even today more than one person—and sometimes even strangers—sleep in the same bed. For very practical reasons some people kept their clothes on just to keep warm or be a little safer in some cases. This type of bundling is the most innocent and ordinary. The kind of bundling more people are interested in, is the type some writers have called BED COURTSHIP. Here is where the trouble and the fun both began.

Americans like the unusual. Bundling is an unusual practice in its truest form. To be sure, persons who bundle must experience some feelings of guilt or embarrassment at first. Soon, however, all such feelings are gone, and the courtship practice begins.

Bundling has a wonderful appeal for young people. Partly because of natural desire and partly because of

the idea itself. How else could a young man or woman be so close, under such intimate circumstances and still have the approval of their parents.

In Pa. Dutchland bundling for the most part is still carried on "under cover" in more ways than one. Recently I was visiting some of my country cousins and started to ask them if they knew about any couples in the area who might still be practicing bundling. Now this dear reader is not usually admitted to anyone-so it is not always easy to get accurate or honest information. Nevertheless, I was told about two couples about which I would like to make several comments.

In the first place, the persons who were involved in this description of bundling were good, honest, and trustworthy persons. They both fully intended to marry eventually, and both came from good families.

Mary and Joseph were very much in love with each other. They wanted to get married as soon as Joseph was able to get enough money together to buy his own farm and some machinery for getting the work done. In case no one ever told you, it takes a lot of money to start farming these days. As it appeared to both of them; it would be at least two or three more years until enough could be saved. Both of the childern wanted to keep the fires of their passions cool as long as possible, so-Bundling served the purpose for their kind of courtship. Both parents agreed that this was the best thing to do under the circumstances. Neither family could see any wrong in it. Neither could the children and a bolster was promptly made.

Mary made it herself-the bolster that is-and did a good job of it too. Since Joseph had to work all day long and into late hours of the evening, it was sometimes as late as 9:00 P.M. before he could call. Naturally he was glad

to see his girl; but he was tired. After ten or fifteen minutes of pleasant chatter with the family, they went to bed together. (fully clothed) Here they could find the privacy they needed and the time to think through their future together. The big, high, bolster was never crsos-ed-so we are told, and both young people treated it like an impassable line of fire.

Nothing really wrong ever happened, save some tempestuous squeezes of the hand and whispering sweet nothings into each others ears. Bundling for this couple was completely satisfactory, chaste, and natural.

The second couple, unlike the first, did not have the approval of the parents, however, no attempt was made to keep them from seeing each other, or from Bundling on the sofa in the living room every night of the week.

Tom and Sally, like Joseph and Mary wanted to get married eventually. They did not set a date. Unlike Joseph and Mary, they did not use a Bolster, Bag or Board between them. (This will be taken up in a later chapter.)

These two young folks simply liked to take off their shoes and socks and rub toes together and kiss and hug. In this case the friction almost caused the fire and both children ran the gamut of human emotions throughout their entire courtship.

In this case what seemed to be harmless bundling to them was actually the prelude to more grandiose meetings which proved to be bad for them. In time, Sally found herself ever more upset and disturbed, while all the while Tom really suffered. Some people would tend to agree somewhat. Remember what we stated at the beginning Bundling, as we understand it is going to bed with one of the opposite sex, or visiting the bedroom of a sweetheart in order to talk, not taking off the clothes, nor at

least very many. Keeping our definition in mind, we must agree that Tom and Sally were not true bundlers. No one would tell me what has become of these two folks.

Human nature has a way of betraying those who go too far. Some bundlers go too far. But then, when they go too far, they are no longer bundling, and that's the problem.

I'm sure that some of the stories about bundlers are purely fiction. Some are approaching the truth in a round about way, while many are perfectly legitimate. It is the legitimate story that should teach us the lesson we seek in this case. To be sure again, we want the truth.

During the last ten years, more than one book on this subject has come on the market. Some are good; some are not so good. Every subject has its followers and every subject its critics. Let it be understood that no one is asked to swallow this material hook, line, and sinker. The way to find out is to ask someone if they bundle. You may get slapped in the face or a black eye; but perhaps it will be worth the effort. At least, read this book from the beginning to the end, before you judge bundling too harshly.

YOU CAN'T FLY NATURE IN THE FACE

Many young people complain that is isn't right that nature makes such demands upon our bodies, the church upon our morals, and the economic system upon our pocketbooks. You just can't fly nature in the face some Dutchman will say That't the way things is.

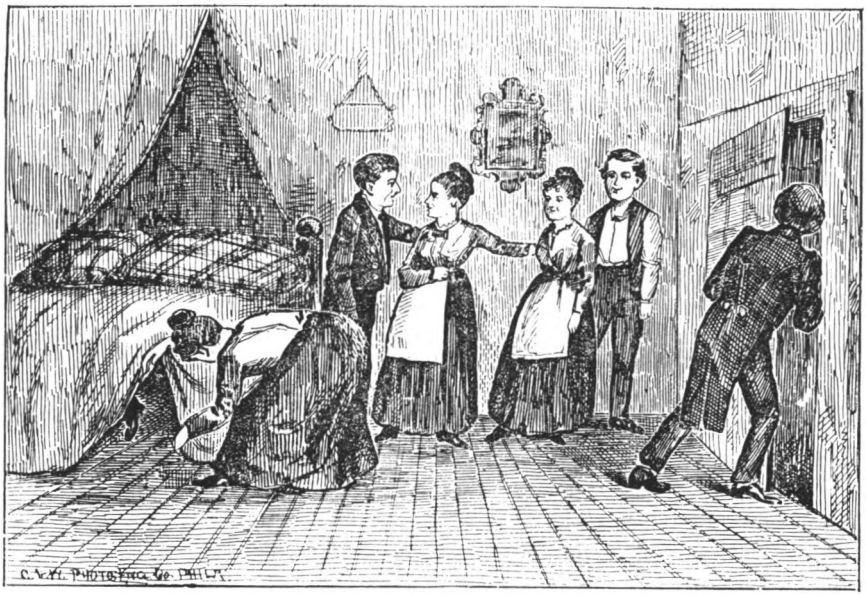
If Bundling ever was a strong force in American society it had to be in the good old days. Actually, the early 1800's mark the best season of the life during which this practice flourished among our people. Life then was different than it is now. Distance was an object to consider. People did not live so close together. America was still

growing and bending and stretching its pioneer muscles. Transportation and roads were not at all a going proposition, and life was hard and much more difficult to endure. To put it bluntly, it wasn't a bed of roses then.

Frontier people had to look nature in the face and do or die. Many stories have been popular about the farmer, the salesman, and the farmers daughter. Most of these stories imply that the only place to sleep was in bed with the farmers daughter, if you happened to be caught out in the cold and had no place to stay overnight. Actually I doubt that this happened very often at all. Even though it makes a good story; understanding the piety of our Dutch people makes this seem somewhat trumped up instead of real. What really often did happen was to offer the stranger a bed or a place in the barn, or to sleep with the farmer himself instead of the daughter. This was natural and a kindly thing to do in time of need or distress to a stranger.

I can remember visiting a farmer near Dover, Pa. who had 14 children. As the hour was getting late and I was personally acquainted with the farmer, I was offered a good hot meal and a place to sleep. I was given the room on the attic with the two youngest boys in the family. "If they bother you, just spank them and put them on the floor," he said. Needless to say, I spent a confused night with feet in my face, little arms in my ribs and knees in my stomach. We arose at 5:00 A.M. I was most pleased that night had slowly become day. Altogether too slowly I might add!

It has to be admitted that all bundling was not the innocent social custom of a simple and conservative people. Let us make no bones about it. If a girl was in the market for a husband; there could be no better way to "strike up" a courtship. Bundling provided the way and the state of things provided the rest.



More Bundlers Than Beds

Much controversy has already been expressed over the fact of bundling. One need only read the books written on the subject to note the skeptics and unbelievers. Many Amishmen for example, will flatly deny that Bundling is or ever was a practice of their particular sect. Some may agree that it was practiced a hundred years ago, but not now.

Occasionally though, you can find one who will tell you that it still goes on here and there among another sect.

One of the groups that you can't convince about the glamour of bundling is the clergy; and we may be able to see their point. Dealing with life as it really is makes the Deacon or Bishop a little better judge than most of us in these matters.

One old Bishop referred to bundling as "the smartest thing the devil created since the snake in the garden".

A story told of a young couple who made confession of their bundling experiences to the Bishop may prove to be humorous to you.

It seems that a young buck was anixous to marry his country miss as soon as possible. The girl's father didn't seem to think the boy had the necessary ingredients for a good Son-in-Law, so he forbade the boy to see his daughter. This was too much for the farmers daughter and her young blade, so they decided to see each other secretly after midnight each night. After some trouble the young girl was able to find a ladder that would reach up to the bed-room window. She carefully hid it from her father's sight (with the help of her mother, who by the way wanted to see her daughter get married off to the boy). Since the girl was still chaste and pure, she had her mother sew two sacks—much like bundling sacks for potatoes. These sacks however, had then been sewn together with a good strong seam up the middle. If the

young man could visit and stay on his own side of the sack, then the girl's father would be impressed and probably would give consent because of his behavior in the face of "great and fierce temptation". To be sure the courtship continued this way for many weeks. Finally, the ladder was found by the girl's father and the plot uncovered. When the old man found the sack as well, one might have expected all kinds of things to happen. Instead he called the young man to the side and congratulated him for his shrewdenss. It seems that quite a few years back, he found himself in the same predicament. The only thing that disturbed the father was that the sack still had the strong seam intact. Apparently the seam was not as strong on the Bundling sack he had used when he was still Bed-courting the young girl's mother. The children were married soon after and the old man got a better Son-in-law than he ever dreamed of. The Bishop reminded the young couple to watch their own children pretty closely; especially when it came time to start courting.

Recently I confronted some individuals I thought may have bundled when they were younger. Just as I had suspected; this was how they met and eventually married. Very few folks will admit they practiced bundling upon making inquiry into the fact; but after some warm conversation in "deutsch" the facts finally came into place. Let us call these two folks Amos & Beatrice. Both were born in Pa. on farms and both had learned the facts of life early. When Amos was 15 he met Beatrice at a public sale. (public sales were and still are a common meeting place for many Dutchmen) Amos was struck like lightning with the plump little farm girl. She was for him. After the auctioneer sold several items Amos made it a point to say hello to this "apple of his eye" and the courtship began that night.

Amos went to visit Beatrice whenever he could and promised not to marry or offend her until they were both 21. For 6 years he bundled with Beatrice. Beatrice was

never ashamed of the fact and laughs now when she thinks about it. All druing the six years Amos swears he never took off more than his hat and his shoes. Both young folks talked and planned and dreamed and wished and held hands and played games in the girls home. Amos went home promprly at 11:00 each night he saw her. Her parents never said a word- so she says- and the only thing that ever happened was the need to restuff the bolster, which suffered sorely during the 6 years of Bundling. Was this immoral? ? ?

IS BUNDLING IMMORAL

As we have mentioned before, Bundling was not looked upon as being a proper thing for people to be doing according to the preachers. More than one stormy lecture and sermon has been delivered on the subject.

Amish clergymen are no exception. If any admit that Bundling or Bed-Courtship ever existed or still does; all I have ever spoken to condemn it vehemently.

Some of the comments against Bundling are made by "former bundlers", mostly by the girls or women who have had guilt feelings associated with the experience.

The following are typical comments made:

"I shouldn't have bundled with him; it was wrong."

"My parents would have killed me if they ever found out."

"I never knew of any other way of courting with a boy."

"The Bishop nearly had a fit when I told him I met the boy secretly in my bed room. I felt so ashamed."

"I suppose I will never be forgiven for doing it."

While many persons condemn the practice, others can find little wrong in it.

A woman from Dover, Pa. who courted in this fashion had the following comment to make.

"We never did anything wrong. All we do is talk and kiss a little; then we go to sleep. I can't see anything wrong with that."

Other arguments for Bundling sound like this:

"Some people say that bed-courting is a sin. I don't think so. My husband and I got to know each other that way and we have been happily married ever since."

An Amish boy told me, "I don't think many of our people bundle. If any do, I don't see anything wrong with it as long as you keep your clothes on and just talk."

A parent had this to say about his boy. "I don't mind if the boy wants to meet some nice girls this way. As long as he minds his manners, nothing will happen bad. If he don't behave, I told him that 'if he makes his bed, he has to lay in it.'"

A young lady had this to say. "We never can see each other more than to sing or go to meetin', so my parents let me have callers at night here in the house. We go to my bedroom and they never complain. About 11:30 P. M. he goes home. We have lots of things to talk about."

IT WONDERS ME WHAT THEY DO TALK ABOUT. DON'T IT WONDER YOU?

Life in community can be simple or complex. Many communities are very touchy about the courting practices of their young folks. In many cases, the church was the place where young folks met for the first time.

Pa. Dutchmen like to eat. I sometimes think this is all they think about. Obviously other things come into their mind, but eating is very important. Anyway, a lot of eatting was done at church picnics and picnics served as a proper place to meet. Chicken corn soup and home made ice cream, a peanut scramble and the bag race. These are ingredients for a day of fun and fellowship. The whole family would turn out on one of these occasions.

It is natural enough to assume that the young people would get together here to laugh and play and talk. Sometimes after the picnic, Jr. was given the buggy or the opportunity to walk home some of the neighboring farm girls who were members of the Sunday School or Church, depending who was responsible for the picnic. The walk home took hours it seemed. Tired and weary from the journey from the church, some of the young men found it necessary to leave immediately or stay the night. It they had to stay the night, some bundled, some talked and had more to eat, and some just went to bed to sleep.

The question of immorality was hinted at in some cases but hardly ever thought about under such innocent circumstances.

I have often thought about life in the country and life in the city. Bundling in the country at least was a lot more necessary than it ever could be in the town, or city. Furthermore, city bundlers, were not always so distant from their sweethearts that they need the convenience of staying overnight or until the wee hours of the morning. Let it be understood though, both Rural America and Urban America found some excuse to bundle.

BUNDLING CAN BRING COMPLICATIONS

One of the reasons why the clergy and lots of parents do their best to discourage Bundling is because of the

complications. The complications came in many different ways.

Sometimes more than one bundler would show up the same night. This suggests the bad planning of some of the boys. Only one bundler per night is the custom.

Every now and then, there were too many children in the family of the girl who wanted to bundle. She may have had younger brothers or sisters in the same room with her. Usually a boy and a girl would at least exchange a kiss or two, much like is done today, and even pet a little. The biggest complication was the little brother or sister. It has been said that more than one little waif nearly froze in his sleep at the foot of the bed, while his older sister and her bundler used the rest of the bed.

Other complications included such things as:

A BOY THAT WAS JUST TOO SHY TO REMOVE HIS SHOES.

A CAT THAT GOT MORE ATTENTION THAN THE BUNDLER BECAUSE IT REFUSED TO LEAVE ITS MISTRESS.

A BED THAT ONLY COULD TAKE ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

A BUNDLING BOARD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BED THAT WOULD NOT COME LOOSE.

OLD DRY ROPES ON THE ROPE BED THAT EITHER SQUEEKED OR TORE LOOSE WITH THE EXTRA WEIGHT AND ACTIVITY.

THE FEELING OF GUILT AFTER STARTING TO BUNDLE.

A GIRL THAT INSISTED ON "SITTING UP" INSTEAD OF LYING DOWN.

TWO PEOPLE THAT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY WERE UP TO IN THE FIRST PLACE!

These and many other things contributed to the little problems associated with the custom of Courtin' in bed. In order to be fair, we should still give our Dutch boys and girls credit for their ingenuity. How many of you who read this book could convince your Mom or Pop to let you bundle with your sweetie-pie????

Oh yes! The complications the preachers had with their members who Bundled were a hundred-fold. The most numerous being an addition to the church roles.

GOSSIP, THE NATURAL ENEMY OF BUNDLERS

People being people like to talk;-especially about other people. When the word got around about a certain couple that Bundled or were "thick" on each other as we say, there was bound to be some gossip about the couple.

Earlier I said that eating must have been about all Dutchmen think about. They thought about other things to be sure. The old fashioned "grapevine" has long branches. Before the coming of the telephone, information had to be carried from place to place on horseback or by wagon stops. Today it moves along on wires and air waves. Early rural America had its own way of getting information back and forth. Sometimes the local scandals were transported through these grapevines of local conversation so fast that it would make your head spin.

Dutchmen are no different than other people in some cases. In the case of gossiping, they seem very ordinary indeed. This is true mostly because of the need for some

tasty bit of information to "pick up the day" or wet the old abbdit (appetite) for lack of something better to do.

Bundlers were open game for the gossipers. Can't you imagine how it might have sounded.

"Did you know that Frank and Sadie have been together every day now for the last two weeks?" "I'll bet it makes with them." "Can't you just see them together now, her with her high filutin ideas and then she stays up all night with Frank at her place." "Well-if you ask me I'd say that they are up to no good." "You can't be with a man that much and not end up in some kind of a fix."

Sometimes, a quilting party was the place to gossip. A group of women would travel to the home of a friend and quilting frames were set up and patches sewed and maybe hook rugs made. Here the gossip would hit an all time high. Can you imagine the things that were talked about. One thing you can bet for sure. Anybody that was bundling and was known about got a thorough going over all that day.

It was not just the women that did the gossiping either. The men are just about as bad. The only difference between the men and the women is that the women had a little more time to do it.

One of the favorite spots for the men to gather was the old country store. There with a piece of cheese in one hand and a pretzel in the other, watching the town champions finish their checker game, many a story was told and thought exchanged. Here they could hash over the events of the day and sit around on little benches and tell of old times and how the younger generation absolutely was going to the dogs.

Any known bundler was really in for it if he happened by the store. Here he was sure to get teased about his

courtship and various other items we shall not get into. Yes-gossip spoiled many a young boy and girls future, their reputations and their fortunes.

THE OLD TIMERS BUNDLED

Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself has said,

LET'S BUNDLE

More than one old timer said let's bundle to his sweetheart. Considerable evidence points in this direction. We mentioned before that the dictionary stated the practice of bundling was practiced in New England. This is true, but as we have also indicated, this was not the only place it was accomplished.

Our own Pennsylvania Dutch people bundled; especially in what may be called "Rural America" or "Rural Pa." Pa. Dutch girls are great cooks and good mothers. They know how to keep house and make a good home for their man. The one great fear that many of our Dutch girls have is the fear of becoming an old maid. There is an old saying in our Dutchland that goes like this:

A GOOD FAT WIFE AND A BIG RED BARN NEVER DID ANY MAN HARM.

That sounds like good advice. The saying could be changed to read this way:

A WELL FED MAN AND A BIG RED BARN NEVER DID ANY WOMAN HARM.

If this were the way the saying went, we might expect that all of our staunch Dutch girls would be eager to get the man first of all, and the barn later. Bundling answered a practical need. By letting the male community know that you were ready to bundle, you let them know you are available for most anything. Especially to get

married. More than one old fashioned boy found his true love while he was bed-courting. Some of our Dutch girls even set out some good eats to go along with the talk and kissing in bed.

It would seem to me to be hard to do much eating with all that other stuff to take care of; that is climbing up the ladder and opening the window, and taking your shoes off and the like.

An old York County Dutchman tells of his experience back in the late 1800's when he can recall "Bundling" with an especially "Eager" farm girl.

"She was fat and jolly" he said, "No finer cook ever set out a plate of chicken corn soup or sour krout and pork for fressin'." She was purty too."

"Well, one night she asked me in to supper and to rest a spell from the heat of the day and the terrible groanin' in my stomach. The groanin' always began when I smelled her home made churry pie and sour krout cookin' on the stove and in the oven. I naturally took her up on the invite and set myself down in the kitchen. After we ate that glorious meal I was all ready for sleepin' or just a spot where I could 'rest my eyes'. I soon fell asleep and when I woke up it was dark out.

While I was asleep,—Elvira was her name—the woman (most Dutch farmers call their wives "the woman") went upstairs and made up the bed. She also let the fire go out and it was really cold in the house. I heard her stirrin' around up there and I knew she was up to something. When she came downstairs she had on a big pair of bloomer like pajamas and invited me to come upstairs to "bundle". Not being a shy fellow I soon got the message and up the stairs I went. She had a big high bed with a goose tick mattress and a bolster right down the middle of the bed. She also had a big quilt that looked like it could warm an army. In what seemed like a split second

Bundler That Got Caught

she was in bed and I was invited to join her. Naturally, I was surprised, but not so dumb that I didn't follow after clothes and all. It was to cold to stand there and argue. An old oil lamp made the room look like it was on fire. We soon entered into some warm conversation when she popped the question. 'Will you marry me?' Now I like sour krout and chicken corn soup and churry pie and all that, but I didn't want over 250 pounds worth of a wife. So I just said No thanks and excuse me and I left as fast as I could. One never knows what them single girls would do to get a man. She might have even removed the bolster between her and me and then I would have been lost forever. I never had such a terrible experience in all my days."

Other stories, not at all as humorous have been related from time to time. One thing seems certain. If bundling was not something most people did in the old days, it was certainly on the minds of many of our old timers.

Bundling had its practical application in early America. More people had to travel by foot than they do now for sure. Many times a traveler would find night approaching and no inn or tavern to find refuge. If a horse got hurt or stumbled, many times the rider found himself very much alone in the country.

As we have earlier stated before, the poorer people and the rural element of our society seemed to be "more kindly affectioned" to the stranger or the traveler than the city or townspeople. Some farmers would offer the barn and the straw pile; some a spare room if they had it, and many the bed-room of the children or of the head of the family. One is not too particular when lost and cold, if an offer is made to share a room or even a bed with someone else.

During the formation of the early colony of Williams-

burg in Virginia at the Raleigh Tavern a form of bundling occurred. With little room in the tavern and many men on the road, both planters and gentlemen of high rank; it sometimes became necessary to share a bed with as many at two other people. It is certainly true that some rooms had as many as ten to fifteen men in them at one time. And–it cost money to stay even under these conditions.

Men and women shared rooms and beds in the same colony of Williamsburg. We don't mean married men and women. either The bundling that went on in some of the other taverns and sleeping houses in the town must have been–to say the least–fierce! The better taverns did not allow this co-habitation of the same room or bed.

York, Lancaster, Adams, and other surrounding counties in Southeastern Pa., have always had their share of Bundling. It has oft times been called "Tarrying" or "Bett schlupfa". Residents of these counties may remember the old stage coach stops or inns and taverns which catered to the traveler with refreshment and "Bundling".

Whenever you ask an old timer about Bundling; if he knows what you are talking about, he will usually smile and say, "Ya, all the good things are gone!"

Whether all the good things are gone or not, depends upon the way you look at it. This writer has found that many young people bundle in Pennsylvania to this day, but just didn't know that's what you call it!

PRIMITIVE SOCIETY HAD A FORM OF BUNDLING

Apart from what many people think is a "purely commercial" aspect of this subject, it seems appropriate to point out that primitive societies have had one form or another of bundling. In some cases "liverate or bundling houses" were maintained in order to teach the young

males of certain tribes and clans how best to learn about the behavior of their adult men and women in this society. Here, first hand experience could be gained and the right approach to marriage considered.

Missionaries of my church, and I was one of them, have suggested this kind of arrangement in the New Guinea area, and also among certain island groups who had no earthly idea about what the practice may sooner or later be called. To them, it was all a part of the puberty rites of the tribe or the natural growing up process of a boy becoming a man, and a girl a woman. Many worse things than these have been noted and witnessed in such societies.

Since most primitive societies are not concerned with the necessity to out do their neighbors in possessing cars, boats, and furniture (save cows, goats or tiger paws) it is not unique nor interesting to them about how one woos or wins his wife or mate; so long as it is within the structure of his own group and not condemned by his tribe. This makes life a lot easier than we have organized it. Oh - those fortunate primitives.

BOLSTERS, BAGS, AND BOARDS

It almost seems funny how hard people worked at keeping apart when all the time they wanted to get together.

Bolsters, bags, and boards were the more usual devices used in or on the bed to keep our Bundlers apart.

THE BAG OR BUNDLING SACK

The bag or bundling sack was a heavy piece of material, sewn up like pajama bottoms with both ends closed at the bottom and most uncomfortable to wear. Some bags or sacks were no more than a crude potatoe sack with a drawstring around the waist. This not only assured com-

plete safety, but also made some parents feel a lot better about the whole thing.

Another kind of sleeping bag (and this may be the forerunner of our modern day sleeping bag) was just what the name implies. It was a full length bag that went from the top to bottom and had no opening whatsoever, except where one crawled in and out at the top of the bag. If ever anything knocked out the spirit of bundling, this did.

BOLSTERS OR LONG PILLOWS

In addition to the bundling sack, a long pillow or Bolster was often used in the bed to make a clear-cut division. It acted as a sort of "no trespassing" sign. The long pillow was easy to cross over and much more comfortable to scale than the hard boards found on some beds. The only thing to keep one on his side when a pillow or bolster was used was his conscience and moral principles or a piercing scream from the girl on the other side of the pillow.

THE CENTER BOARD

The long center board was the best deterrent against any foolish notions a young swain might have. Not only was it high and hard, but nearly impossible to scale. Several old pictures and wood cut drawings illustrate the awkwardness of the board. Some however, were easily removed. This fact alone caused much consternation to some trusting or fretting parent. History may prove the center board the most prolific boon to love and marriage the world has ever seen.

THE REAL TRICK TO BUNDLING

The real trick to bundling was to see how quietly you could lay all night long with your beloved by your side and still remain chaste and honorable. After all, the

practice of bed courting is not all what some people would seem to make it. If it was only an innocent way to get to know each other better; then let us not look upon it too critically. If, as many of the preachers said "it was the best device the devil had next to the snake in the garden." Then, let us each deal with it according to the measure of grace and mercy that lies within us.

IN CONCLUSION

We have examined the ancient custom or practice of Bundling with an open mind and the eye of an objective observer. What do you think? Do you believe or disbelieve what we have stated. Many will take it all with a grain of salt. Some will giggle and like the idea, while others will be repulsed and offended. But for the sake of space we could list over 100 books on the subject, both light and scholarly. You must decide and ponder the facts and the fiction.

Historically, at least, it is fair to say that Bundling is a fact that is verifiable and provable. If not from printed histories, then from proven experiences of men and women who will admit that they have bundled or knew about someone who did.

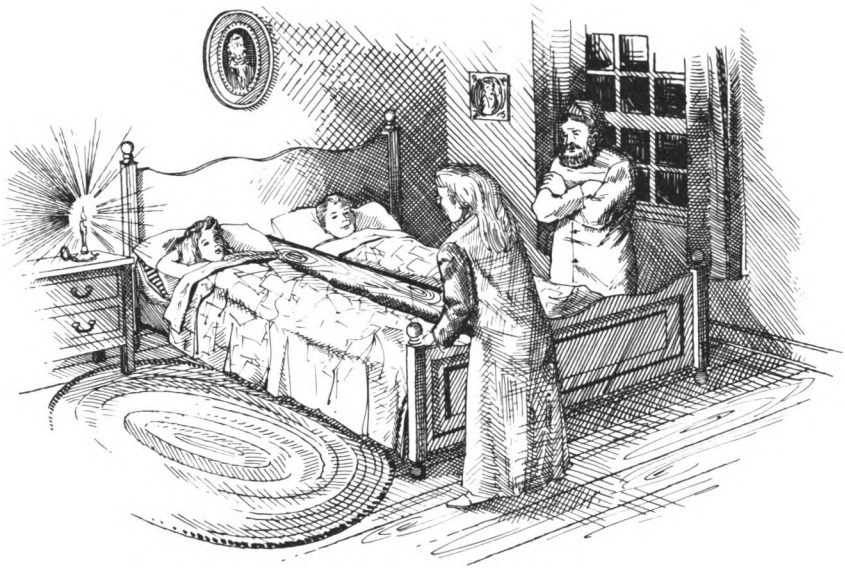
Most social scientists who have engaged in a study of this form of courtship will agree that no one group or sect has an exclusive claim on bundling or bed-courtship It is a practice that really has no conclusive beginning. This writer would tend to accept the fact of bundling as an obvious practice of the old world as well as the new. Since however, the obvious is not always noticable, one might expect many people to miss this great indoor sport altogether.

During the last two to five years, a growing group of writers have been trying to capitalize on what seems to be the supra-sexual aspects of this courtship. To simply reduce this to "free love" or inifnite sexual freedom

would only serve to make an honest practice something less than life exposed it to be. The reader of the book is invited to challenge any of the writing on this subject in the spirit of academic content he finds or does not find as well as the questions it may bring to his mind. Surely, it is meant to serve the best ends of research into odd and perhaps to some, almost crude behavior of persons who otherwise never meant it to offend or distress anyone. Think what you will, but consider all the material available before drawing any vigorous conclusions which might tend to negate any honest effort on the part of many authors of this subject.

It seems as though Bundling would have endured because of its long history; especially among our Pa. Dutch people and the sects associated with us. However one must remember. What may seem entirely probable today, may be entirely improbable tommorrow. If the preachers, Amish leaders, and other concerned parents continue to unite in their effort to erase this practice from their ethnic and cultrual life, then surely it will desist from being a fact and be no more than an entertaining idea for most to chuckle about.

And what do I think about it all? It wonders me!



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